

**Advisory Commission  
Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind  
November 25, 2008  
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.**

*Summary of Meeting*

**Members Present:** Senator Emmett Hanger, Senator Harry Blevins, Delegate Matthew Lohr, Jr., Delegate Mamyé BaCote, alumni representative Mr. Ralph Shelman, parent representative Ms. Maureen Hollowell.

**Others Present:** Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction  
H. Douglas Cox, Assistant Superintendent, DOE  
Karen Trump, Director of State Operated Programs, DOE  
Nancy Armstrong, Superintendent VSDB-S

**Opening Remarks**

Senator Emmett Hanger opened the meeting with an explanation of the meeting to receive an update about the consolidation of the two Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. Senator Hanger congratulated Dr. Wright on her appointment as the new Superintendent of Public Instruction. Everyone present introduced themselves.

**Welcome from Superintendent of Public Instruction**

Dr. Wright welcomed the members of the Advisory Commission and expressed her commitment to the current efforts through the capitol project to improve the learning environments for the students attending the Staunton program. She further explained her recent visit to the campus and how impressed she was with the educational opportunities there for the students.

**Reports**

Dr. Nancy Armstrong shared current enrollment figures of 134 students (Deaf = 87, Blind = 28 and MD = 19). She relayed the process by which the 19 Hampton students transferred to the program and other matters related to instruction and delivery of services. She explained the ADA work completed in Bass Hall Dormitory to receive the Hampton students and that although there was one classroom established in the dormitory building, plans were underway to move those students into a classroom in the Blind Department. Several students were integrated into age appropriate dormitory settings outside of Bass Hall. Dr. Armstrong also explained the changes in transportation for these students of accessing a drop off site rather than being picked up and delivered directly to their homes. She distributed the school's recent newsletter.

Dr. Trump read a brief update from Dr. Wilkins who was not able to attend the meeting. The Hampton campus current provides support services to 16 children across six school divisions visiting schools between two to three times a week. The change of placement has been very smooth for most students and more difficult for a few. The teacher consultants provide support in many areas such as behavioral support, use of appropriate

equipment and instructional materials, staff training, coordination with outside resources and working with parents.

### **The Consolidation Project**

Dr. Trump provided a brief summary of the planning process for the Staunton campus from activities to complete the capital project submission in November 2007 to the current activities. She introduced Mr. Ken Bunch, Project Manager with Ballou, Justice and Upton (BJU). Mr. Bunch presented the architectural program design, the principles that support the changes and the timeframe for completing the construction.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **General Assembly Session/Legislative Issues**

Given that the transition services provided through the Hampton outreach consultants will end in June 2009, there was discussion of what additional activities could best serve the region. The topics explored included professional training for teachers, continuing outreach, needed student supports and the VSDB capital project.

### **Status of Advisory Commission Membership**

Senator Hanger raised the question of whether and/or how the Advisory Commission might wish to continue now that consolidation has been achieved. He described the previous structure of the school's and other state schools under a Board of Visitors. He reported that the Advisory Commission had been established 11 years ago with the primary purpose of assisting with the task of consolidation. The group agreed to continue the Advisory Commission for now and to explore and consider the best replacement options or other roles the Commission could serve.

### **Discussion and Next Steps**

Senator Blevins inquired about the school's expected role in the education of children with cochlear implants and shared the story of a young man he recently met with a cochlear implant. Dr. Armstrong shared that the school serves students with cochlear implants and teaches all deaf students to speak who are receptive to that mode of communication.

The question was raised about the status of reversion clause issue for the 25 acres of Hampton property resolved. Mr. Cox reported that this matter was resolved. There was further discussion about the surplus property at Staunton and Hampton.

Mrs. Hollowell inquired about the extent of accommodations for students with sensory impairments in the new learning and dormitory environments. Mr. Bunch explained that all standards are met but due to the unique circumstances of the needs of the children, many times, additional features are added. There are also special needs consultants hired with regard to needed acoustics, lighting, floor and wall finishes and technology.

It was proposed that the next meeting be at the Staunton campus.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Summary prepared by Karen Trump